



***PLANNING BUILDING
AND
PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT***

**When is a
Permit
Required?
BH - 001**

21630 11th Avenue S, Ste D • Des Moines, Washington 98198 • Tel: (206) 870-7576 Fax: (206) 870-6544

***When do I need a residential building, mechanical,
electrical, or plumbing permit?***

2009 IRC states that “No building or electrical, mechanical, or plumbing system shall be constructed, enlarged, altered, repaired, moved, demolished, or changed unless a permit has been obtained. Building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing, tree and grading permits may be required.”

The purpose of this handout is to help you decide whether or not your **residential** project requires a permit. This handout is not meant to answer questions regarding commercial projects as all commercial projects will require a permit and will almost always require a plan review before issuance of a permit.

Please note that no list or handout can cover every possibility and there are always those projects that will not fit the ‘normal’ or ‘average’ scope. If you have any questions as to whether or not a permit is necessary for your project, please contact our Building Department at (206) 870-7576, or come by our office during Open

When do I need a building permit?

We require a building permit for the following **residential** projects: exterior window, door, and skylight replacements, re-roofs, decks, dock repairs and additions, garage or basement additions or conversions, home business conversions, interior remodels, rockeries over 4’ in height and any size rockery supporting a surcharge or sloped ground, in ground or above ground swimming pools and swim spas, hot tubs, and saunas (including prefabricated pools over 5,000 gallons), any detached accessory structures exceeding 200 square feet (this includes loft floor space), fences over 6’ in height.

We do not require a permit for painting, papering, tiling, carpeting, cabinets, countertops, and other similar finish work, replacing small numbers of shingles or repairing small sections of roof overlay.

We do not require a permit for the placement of swings, slides, or other playground equipment or maintenance of existing landscaping on residential property.

Please be aware that even if you do not need a permit, you will still need to meet Des Moines Municipal Code zoning requirements for the area in which you live. Prior to any construction or placement of structures on the property, please contact our Zoning Department at (206) 870-7576 or drop by our office to talk to a Planner during Open Counter Hours of 9am - 11am, Monday through Friday.

When do I need a plumbing permit?

We require a plumbing permit before a plumbing system or fixture is installed, altered, or remodeled. Examples include new installation of a dishwasher, electric water heater, toilet, or irrigation system. Replacement of a bathtub or shower requires a permit. The replacement of all or part of a water supply or waste system also requires a permit.

We do not require a permit to stop leaks or clear stoppages, unless you alter or replace piping. We do not require a permit to replace a fixture with a similar fixture in the same location.

We require a mechanical permit before mechanical equipment is installed, altered, replaced, or remodeled. Examples are installation or alteration of gas piping; replacement of furnaces; installation or replacement of gas fireplaces; installation of gas logs in an existing wood-burning fireplace; and replacement or installation of gas space heaters and gas water heaters.

We do not require a permit to replace an existing gas clothes dryer, stove-top, oven, or gas log, if there is no gas piping being installed or altered.

Mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work for which submittal of plans ("plan review") is required may not use the over-the-counter permit process. All commercial projects require plan review and can not be issued over the counter.

When do I need an electrical permit?

We require an electrical permit before electrical equipment is added, altered, or extended within a new or existing electrical system. Examples are a change or upgrade of an existing electrical service panel; adding circuits for an addition; and installation of a spa, hot tub, or sauna.

We do not require a permit to install these types of residential low-voltage systems: garage door opener circuits, built-in vacuum control circuits, stereo systems, telephone and data lines, and landscape and garden lights.

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Emergency Repairs -

Help!! I don't have time to get a permit!! What do I do??

An emergency means a problem affecting a basic human need. We do not require a permit before getting an emergency repaired, but you will need to come purchase a permit on the first business day following and request an inspection to make sure the work is up to code and meets life safety standards.

Common examples are repairing or replacing a broken hot water tank or furnace. You may make damaged structural members, roofs, decks, or stairs safe and weather tight. However, repair work cannot be done until you obtain a permit.